

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8097
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AMEMBASSY BERLIN
USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMCONSUL MUNICH

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BONN 07941

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, PGOV, UR, GW
SUBJECT: ON THE EVE OF THE BREZHNEV VISIT - WHAT DOES
IT ALL MEAN?

REFS: (A) MOSCOW 9068 (B) BONN 7801 (C) BONN 7596

BEGIN SUMMARY.

A SINGULAR LACK OF EXPECTATIONHANGS IN THE AIR
AS THE SECOND BREZHNEV VISIT TO BONN FINALLY NEARS.

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NEITHER THE GERMANS NOR THE SOVIETS APPEAR TO BE EX-
PECTING MAJOR BREAK-THROUGHS, BUT BOTH WANT THE VISIT
FOR THEIR OWN DIVERSE REASONS. THERE WILL BE THREE
DOCUMENTS TO SIGN, INCLUDING A FRAMEWORK
ECONOMIC ACCORD STILL UNDER NEGOTIATION. WE DO NOT
SEE THE VISIT AS PRODUCING ANYTHING THAT WOULD DAMAGE
US INTERESTS OR NARROW OUR OWN POLICY OPTIONS TOWARD

EITHER MOSCOW OR BONN. END SUMMARY.

1. IT IS REMARKABLE HOW, ON THE EVE OF WHAT WILL BE BREZHNEV'S SECOND AND LAST VISIT TO BONN, ONE CAN FIND SO LITTLE ENTHUSIASM OR EVEN EXPECTANCY IN THIS CITY. IT IS CLEAR BY NOW THAT NEITHER SIDE IS ABLE OR READY TO PERFORM AN ACT OF WILL THAT WILL BRING RELATIONS TO A NEW PLATEAU. INSTEAD, BOTH ARE CARRYING OUT A LONG STANDING COMMITMENT WITHOUT HOPING TO ACHIEVE ANYTHING EITHER MAJOR OR NEW.

WHY THEN THE VISIT?

2. CONVERSATIONS ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM HERE SHOW THAT SCHMIDT PRINCIPALLY WANTS TO HOST BREZHNEV IN ORDER TO KEEP RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW ON A STABLE BASIS. SCHMIDT EXPECTS BREZHNEV TO PASS FROM POWER SOON. IN FACT, MANY SENIOR GERMANS BELIEVE BREZHNEV IS ALREADY PASSING FROM POWER, AND THAT THE TRANSITION HAS BEGUN. NONETHELESS, SCHMIDT WANTS TO HAVE SOME BASIS ON WHICH TO SUSTAIN A MEASURE OF GOOD RELATIONS DURING THE ANTICIPATED INTERREGNUM. SCHMIDT ALSO WANTS TO CONTINUE TO IMPROVE TIES WITH EASTERN EUROPE AND THE GDR. HE BELIEVES THIS WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT AT LEAST SOME GESTURE TOWARD THE MISTRUSTFUL RUSSIANS.

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3. FOR DOMESTIC PURPOSES, SCHMIDT ALSO WANTS TO SHOW THAT HIS GOVERNMENT CAN SUSTAIN THE DETENTE POLICIES THAT HIS PREDECESSORS SO DRAMATICALLY INITIATED. WITH ELECTIONS AHEAD, HE WANTS TO BE ABLE TO ARGUE THAT THE OPPOSITION CANNOT DO AS WELL AS HE IN MANAGING A VITAL ELEMENT OF GERMAN'S FOREIGN POLICY.

4. THE GERMANS DO NOT EXPECT VERY MUCH FROM BREZHNEV HIMSELF. THEY THINK HE WILL READ OR MOUTHE PREPARED AND CLEARED POSITIONS. THEY ARE INCLINED TO BE CAUTIOUS ABOUT EXPOSING HIM TO THE PRESS OR TO MEETINGS WITH LEADING INDUSTRIALISTS IN SITUATIONS THAT MIGHT REQUIRE HIM TO REACT QUICKLY AND SPONTANEOUSLY. ONE OF THEIR KEY CONCERNS, SHARED BY THE SOVIET EMBASSY HERE, APPEARS TO BE TO GIVE HIM ADEQUATE REST PERIODS.

5. THE RUSSIANS HERE TELL US AND OTHERS THAT THEY TOO

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EXDIS

WANT TO STABILIZE DETENTE SO AS NOT TO TIE IT CLOSELY
TO BREZHNEV'S FATE. THEY DO NOT WANT TO LEAVE THE VISIT
AS AN OPEN AGENDA ITEM THAT COULD CONSTITUTE A FIRST
HURDLE FOR BREZHNEV'S SUCCESSOR. MOREOVER, THEY APPEAR
GENUINELY INTERESTED IN IMPROVED ECONOMIC TIES. SOME
GERMANS HAVE SPECULATED THAT FEARS OF GROWING CHINESE
PENETRATION IN EUROPE MAY HAVE SPURRED BREZHNEV'S DE-
CISION TO VISIT, OR THAT THE RUSSIANS WANT TO REMIND
THE GDR THAT THEY REPEAT THEY ARE PRIMUS INTER PARES IN
TIES WITH THE FRG.

6. THE GERMANS ARE ALSO LOOKING FOR STABILITY. THE
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SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT FEELS MORE COMFORTABLE WITH DETENTE
THAN WITH CONFRONTATION, AT LEAST IN PART BECAUSE IT

MUST FEAR THAT THE GERMAN ELECTORATE WOULD CHOOSE ANOTHER GOVERNMENT TO CONDUCT A CONFRONTATION. MORE-OVER, DETENTE BRINGS GENUINE HUMAN RELIEF TO DIVIDED GERMANY, AN IMPROTANT POLITICAL ASSET TO ANY GOVERNMENT. TRADE ALSO REMAINS IMPORTANT, THOUGH IT IS VIEWED HERE NOT AS AN OBJECTIVE OF DETENTE BUT AS AN INSTRUMENT.

7. BOTH SIDES WANT TO CONTINUE TO REAP THE BENEFITS OF DETENTE. HE GERMANS WANT THE SOVIETS TO AVOID INFLAM-ING TENSIONS AROUND BERLIN, EVEN AS THEY KNOW THAT NO AGREEMENT ON THE CITY'S ROLE IN GERMAN-SOVIET ACCORDS CAN BE REACHED. SCHMIDT WILL TALK TO BREZHNEV ALONG THESE LINES. THE SOVIETS WANT THE GERMANS TO ACCEPT THE GROWING DISPARITY BETWEEN EAST AND WEST EUROPEAN DISARMAMENT UNDER THE COVER OF DETENTE. EACH WANTS TO USE WHAT REMAINS OF THE SPIRIT OF DETENTE IN ORDER TO RESTRAIN THE OTHER.

TOPICS

8. THREE TOPICS WILL BE CENTRAL TO THE DISCUSSION, WITH LITTLE PROGRESS EXPECTED ON TWO OF THEM:

-- THE FIRST TOPIC WILL BE A WIDE-RANGING DISCUSSION OF DISARMMENT, THE STATE OF DETENTE, AND THE LIKE. PRESS SPECULATION HAS IT THAT MBFR WILL BE DISCUSSED AND MAY EVEN BE CENTRAL TO THE DISCUSSION. WE KNOW, HOWEVER, THAT SCHMIDT HAS NOT HAD ANOTHER ONE OF THE MBFR "BRAIN-STORMING" SESSIONS THAT HE TWICE HAD LAST YEAR. INSTEAD, HE IS EXPECTED TO PRESENT HIS CASE ON BEHALF OF THE NATO POSITION. BREZHNEV WILL UNDOUBTEDLY PRESS SCHMIDT TO
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TURN AGAINST THE NEUTRON WARHEAD. WE ARE TOLD THAT SCHMIDT (AND GENSCHER) WILL REPLY FIRMLY AND UNMISTAKABLY, ALSO CITING THE SS-20. NOBODY EXPECTS ANY BREAK-THROUGH ON THIS OR OTHER TOPICS.

-- THE SECOND TOPIC WILL BE BERLIN AND BILATERAL POLITI-CAL QUESTIONS. HERE AGAIN, NOBODY EXPECTS ANY PROGRESS. A GDR DIPLOMAT HAS TOLD US THAT BREZHNEV'S POSITIONS ON BERLIN HAVE ALREADY BEEN DISCUSSED WITH AND APPROVED BY HONECKER. MOREOVER, POLITICAL JOURNALISTS HERE TELL US THAT BREZHNEV WILL STOP IN EAST BERLIN AFTER BONN, AND THEY DO NOT THINK HE WILL WANT TO USE THE OCCASION TO TO BREAK BAD NEWS. FONOFF SOURCES DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT BREZHNEV WILL STOP IN EAST BERLIN.

-- THE THIRD TOPIC WILL BE ECONOMIC COOPERATION. STATE SECRETARY HERMES IS NOW IN MOSCOW WORKING OUT THE DE-

TAILS OF A 25-YEAR ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT, ORIGINALLY VALID FOR TEN YEARS BUT RENEWABLE FOR THREE PERIODS OF 5 YEARS EACH. MUCH OF WHAT IS IN THE AGREEMENT MERELY RATIFIES EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS. HOWEVER, ONE CRUCIAL SECTION COULD PROVIDE FOR GERMAN LOAN GUARANTEES AND LOW INTEREST RATE GUARANTEES FOR MASSIVE CONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS. UNTIL HERMES COMES BACK OR UNTIL BREZHNEV LEAVES, WE WILL NOT KNOW THE PRECISE TERMS. SENIOR PEOPLE TELL US THE AGREEMENT COULD BE SIGNIFICANT ALTHOUGH, AS USUAL, THE SOVIETS WILL ASK FOR SOFTER CONDITIONS THAN THEY WILL BE ABLE TO GET.

9. IN ADDITION TO THE ECONOMIC AGREEMENT, THE VISIT WILL PRODUCE AN ALMOST INTERMINABLE COMMUNIQUE AS WELL AS A DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES THAT THE SOVIET HAVE ONLY RECENTLY SUGGESTED. THE DRAFTS THAT WE HAVE SEEN REVEAL NOTHING STARTLING OR UNEXPECTED, AND THEY ARE OBVIOUSLY STILL UNDER INTENSE NEGOTIATIONS.

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10. AS THE VISIT APPROACHES, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE MEN

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EXDIS

WHO MADE GERMAN-SOVIET DETENTE SIX YEARS AGO HAVE LEFT THE SCENE OR ARE ABOUT TO LEAVE. IN SENIOR GERMAN CIRCLES, ONLY BRANDT, BAHR AND WEHNER RETAIN ANY CONVICTION THAT GENUINE PROGRESS CAN BE MADE. BUT THEY ARE IN A POSITION TO PUT PRESSURE ON SCHMIDT. SCHMIDT IS ACTING ON THE BASIS OF A COOL JUDGMENT THAT HE WILL RECEIVE A MODEST BENEFIT BUT HAS NO ILLUSIONS THAT HE IS MAKING HISTORY. SENIOR FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS, FROM GENSCHER TO THE POLITICAL DIRECTOR, ALL REGARD MOSCOW WITH GROWING SKEPTICISM BECAUSE OF ITS STUBBORNESS ON BERLIN AND BECAUSE OF ITS MASSIVE BUILD UP IN EASTERN EUROPE.

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11. AMBASSADOR FALIN, SENT HERE BY BREZHNEV TO CONSOLIDATE AND ADVANCE DETENTE, MAKES NO SECRET OF HIS BITTERNESS AND OF HIS DESIRE TO RETURN HOME AS SOON AS DECENTLY POSSIBLE AFTER THE VISIT IS OVER. WE UNDERSTAND HE WILL BECOME DIRECTOR OF TASS.

THE U. S. INTEREST

12. EVEN AS THEY ARE TALKING TO EACH OTHER, MOSCOW AND BONN ARE WATCHING US. THE SOVIET UNION SHOWED LAST YEAR THAT IT WANTED GOOD RELATIONS WITH GERMANY EVEN IF TIES TO THE UNITED STATES WENT SOUR. NOW, IN A PERIOD OF UNCERTAINTY ABOUT US, IT APPARENTLY WANTS AT LEAST TO STABILIZE THE SITUATION HERE NO MATTER WHAT MAY HAPPEN WITH US. BREZHNEV'S READINESS TO COME HERE BEFORE A WASHINGTON VISIT, CONTRARY TO WHAT THE RUSSIANS HERE HAD EARLIER PREDICTED, AT LEAST SUGGESTS THAT MOSCOW DOES NOT WANT SOVIET-GERMAN TIES TO BE HOSTAGE TO SALT.

13. FROM THE STANDPOINT OF AMERICAN INTERESTS AND POLICY OPTIONS, NOTHING THAT WILL HAPPEN HERE NEXT WEEK SHOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT THOSE INTERESTS OR NARROW THOSE OPTIONS. THE GERMANS AND THE SOVIETS WILL BE PUTTING A

TEMPORARY SEAL ON AN EXISTING RELATIONSHIP WITH BOTH
SIDES STILL HOPING THAT THE BENEFITS THEY DERIVE FROM
IT WILL EXCEED THE BURDENS. IN DOING SO, THEY WILL NOT
BE MOVING EITHER AHEAD OR BACKWARDS, BUT STAYING IN
PLACE UNTIL THEY SEE MORE CLEARLY THE DIRECTION IN
WHICH MAJOR WORLD EVENTS WILL GO.
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